June 16, 2026

Request for Proposals for Consultant to Conduct a Feasibility Study for a Potential Accelerator/Incubator in Butte, Montana

Butte Local Development Corporation & Headwaters RC&D
P.O. Box 507
Butte, MT 59703

Contact: Kelly Sullivan - Executive Director
Butte Local Development Corporation & Headwaters RC&D
406/490-8439 (Mobile)
ksullivan@bldc.net

Letter to Bidders

The **Butte Local Development Corporation/Headwaters RC&D** ('The Organization') is pleased to offer potential bidders the opportunity to submit a proposal to conduct a feasibility study of the Butte area, in conjunction with the Headwaters Tech Hub (HTH); Montana Technological University (Montana Tech); and Butte-Silver Bow City-County Government, Community Development Department (BSB), to determine the efficacy of an accelerator or incubator in the community.

This Request for Proposal consists of the following documents:

- **Instructions to Bidder**
- **Scope of Work**
- **Evaluation Criteria**

- Acknowledge receipt of RFP and all documents, by email, to ksullivan@bldc.net.
- Acknowledge intent to submit a competitive bid by July 3, 2026, 4:00 p.m. MDT, by email, to ksullivan@bldc.net.

Headwaters/BLDC Development Opportunity
Opportunity Overview
The Organization has secured initial planning funding from the Montana Department of Commerce's Opportunities in Rural Economies (ORE) grant program, for the purpose of soliciting proposals for a feasibility study. The study is to be conducted to determine the efficacy of an accelerator or incubator in the Butte community, in conjunction with Montana Tech.

Vision
To establish Butte, Montana as a leading hub for innovation, entrepreneurship, and technology-driven economic growth by supporting researchers, students, entrepreneurs, and innovators in launching, scaling, and sustaining high-skill, high-wage companies in partnership with Montana Tech, BSB, and the broader Southwest Montana region.

Mission
To foster long-term economic resilience and innovation in Butte and the surrounding region by:
- Expanding research, workforce, and innovation capacity through collaboration with Montana Tech
- Connecting university talent, research, and resources with private industry, investors, and community partners

- Supporting entrepreneurship, commercialization, and business growth through a comprehensive incubator and/or accelerator program
- Creating pathways for startups and emerging companies to access mentorship, technical assistance, capital, and market opportunities
- Facilitating development of the physical, technological, and collaborative infrastructure necessary to attract and retain innovation-based businesses and high-quality jobs in Butte and Southwest Montana

The Organization, HTH, Montana Tech and BSB want to identify the highest and best use of a potential accelerator or incubator, in order to generate economic growth for Butte and the surrounding Southwest Montana region. Through the planning process, we are soliciting proposals with your master planning team's best ideas.

There currently exists a gap in the entrepreneurial ecosystem at Montana Tech, which results in too many skilled, well-educated graduates leaving the area upon graduation. While the region benefits from strong academic programs, technical expertise, and a growing interest in innovation and business development, there is not yet a fully developed system to consistently support the transition of ideas, research, and talent into scalable startup and growth-oriented companies.

We are asking bidders to identify in their proposal how they will meaningfully engage The Organization, HTH, Montana Tech and BSB, throughout the planning process to ensure the resulting incubator/accelerator model reflects local strengths, aligns with regional economic development priorities, and builds a sustainable entrepreneurial support system. Proposals should outline strategies for stakeholder engagement, collaborative decision-making, assessment of existing assets and gaps, and development of actionable recommendations that strengthen innovation, commercialization, workforce retention, and business formation opportunities in Butte and Southwest Montana.

Sincerely,

Kelly Sullivan, Executive Director
Butte Local Development Corporation and Headwaters RC&D

Table of Contents

Table of Contents ..... page 4

Instructions to Bidder..... page 5

Evaluation Criteria.....page 5 & addendum B

Selection Schedule.....page 6

Process and Scope of Work Requested .....page 7 & addendum A

Format for Technical Proposals.....page 7

Commercial Proposal.....page 9

Proposal Narrative.....page 10

Proposal Forms.....page 10

Submission Authorization.....page 11

This is a competitive bidding process and the intent is to select the most qualified bidder that provides the best combined technical and commercial proposal and addresses all requirements.

The selected bidder will be asked to sign a contract with Headwaters RC&D Area, Inc.

1. **Submission Date:**
   Proposals are due on Monday, August 3, 2026 by 4:00pm MDT.

2. **Validity:**
   Proposals shall be valid for a minimum of 90 days from the date of submission.

3. **Delivery:**
   Mail: Bids should be delivered at (physical) or to (PO Box) the address(es) below, before the submission date, to be considered:

Butte Local Development Corporation
Physical Address: 65 E. Broadway St, 5th Floor, Butte, MT 59701
Mailing Address: BLDC, P.O. Box 507, Butte, MT 59703
Attn: Kelly Sullivan, Executive Director

Electronically: Proposals must ***also*** be submitted electronically, through this portal: https://airtable.com/appvm9iB1SKvleVyB/pagToc1dCEtFBJFDa/form

Instructions to Bidder

4. Questions:

If bidder has any questions or requires clarification on any aspects of the proposal they should submit those questions in writing to:

Kelly Sullivan - ksullivan@bldc.net

With the subject line: **RFP Question(s) for Accelerator**

Any question responses or clarifications provided by The Organization or its partners will be made in writing via an addendum format by email and will be shared with all bidders, if it impacts the intended objectives or scope of the RFP. If a bidder submits a question about a specific unique proprietary or bidder-proposed alternative, it will not necessarily be shared with other bidders.

All inquiries and questions must be submitted before 4:00 PM MDT on Thursday, July 9, 2026, in order to be considered and allow time for The Organization's response and bidder inclusion in their proposal.

5. Evaluation Criteria

A comprehensive evaluation will be made of the various provisions of each response. Each proposal that conforms to the requirements of this RFP will be evaluated and ranked in accordance with the information requested. The ORE Grant working group, using the criteria set forth in this RFP, will evaluate the information provided by the Bidder. The Bidder is encouraged to assemble a team and a response that can best address all considerations and objectives. Proposals will be evaluated based on the following factors (see Addendum B Evaluation Criteria):

- Related Experience on Similar Projects (25 Points)
- Personnel Qualifications (20 Points)
- Local Knowledge and Stakeholder Engagement Approach (20 Points)
- Research Approach (15 Points)
- Schedule, Resources, and Project Management (10 Points)
- Ability to Meet the Organization's Budget (10 Points)

6. Components of the Selection Process

6.1 Responding to the Specifications

- Each bidder to this RFP is expected to submit a well organized, easy-to-read, written proposal.

- Bidders responding to this RFP should deliver three (3) copies of the written proposals at or to the address in Section 3, no later than 4:00 PM (MDT) on Monday, August 3, 2026. The proposals should be provided in both hard copy and electronic (PDF) form. Delivery of only an electronic copy of the proposal is not acceptable. Proposals received after the deadline, or which do not comply with the requirements of this RFP, shall be rejected.

6.2 Selection

The ORE Grant working group will evaluate all Proposals. The top bidders meeting the RFP requirements will be interviewed by the working group. The Working Group will then select the Proposal that best meets the evaluation criteria for the combined Technical and Commercial Proposal.

6.3 Estimated Selection Schedule

RFP Action Items	**Timeline / Date**
RFP Issued	Tuesday, June 16, 2026
Final Inquiries/Questions Submitted by 4:00 p.m. MDT	Thursday, July 9, 2026
Proposals Due by 4:00 p.m. MDT	Monday, August 3, 2026
Consultant/Teams Shortlisted for Interview	By Friday, August 14, 2026
Consultant/Team Interviews	Week of August 17, 2026
Selection of Consultant	No later than August 24, 2026
Execution of Consultant Agreement	By September 4 , 2026
Anticipated Completion Date for Feasibility Study *(extension on grant from Montana Dept. of Commerce may be eligible for a short extension beyond this date, if needed).*	February 27, 2027

7. Scope of Work:

The Scope of Work document provides the bidder with a description of the objectives of the project, stakeholders, considerations and expected deliverables for the Feasibility Study. The Organization is looking for an experienced consulting team that can provide guidance on the best route to take in determining the efficacy of a potential incubator or accelerator in Butte (in the Historic Uptown District or at another site TBD), or, on-campus at Montana Tech. Bidders shall prepare their proposal to address all considerations and deliverables described in the Scope of Work.

8. Technical Proposal: (Do not include any cost data in the Technical Proposal)

The Technical Proposal shall provide a clear description of how the bidder plans to organize and execute development of the Feasibility Plan, deliverables for the Scope of Work, and objectives. Their Technical Proposal shall include a list and qualification of employees who they will assign and use for developing each deliverable.

Format for Technical Proposals

All proposals must be organized and outlined as follows.

8.1 Bidder's Proposal

Proposers shall submit a Technical Proposal that includes a cover page as the first page of the submission. The cover page must identify the proposer, primary contact person, contact information, and the project name. The remainder of the proposal should address all requirements outlined in this RFP in the order presented.

8.2 Executive summary

The proposals must begin with an Executive Summary that clearly and concisely summarizes the content of the Proposal including an organizational chart of the responding team, expertise of the team and management structure.

8.3 Company Profile(s)

The responding master planning team shall submit a general company profile of each firm (i.e. subcontractors). Information to be provided should include, but not be limited to, company background and history and key personnel.

8.3.1. Key Team Personnel

Submit names and project experience for each key team member with whom The Organization would be working if the team is selected. Each resume should include the person's educational background and employment history and describe the person's role on this project; area of expertise; similar/relevant project experience and basis for selection.

The response to the Key Personnel Category should demonstrate the following:
(1) sufficient and appropriate organization and resource capabilities to properly complete the project,
(2) sufficient experience in conducting feasibility studies (preferably in a community similar to Butte, MT and/or affiliated with a higher education institution) to successfully complete the project and address issues that may arise,
(3) an effective project management structure to include personnel with demonstrated experience, skills, education, and proficiency to develop the project,
(4) clear demonstration of the extent to which the Bidder will commit its expertise.

8.3.2. Subcontractors:

If a bidder plans to use any subcontractors, they should be clearly identified and information provided on their qualifications. Bidder shall describe what the subcontractor's responsibilities will be and with which deliverables they will be involved. Bidder should describe the various stages of the development and all the deliverables that are required at the end of that stage.

Any plans for inclusion of local resources for any of the project activities should be clearly identified, describe how and with which activities the company will be involved and what deliverables they will develop.

8.4 Primary Contact Information

Identify the primary individual responsible for the submission of this proposal and to whom The Organization should correspond with for all questions. Please provide name, title, firm, phone, and email address(es).

8.5 Scope of Work

Responses should acknowledge Objectives and Considerations and outline the process for addressing all activities/deliverables outlined in Addendum A, titled Scope of Work.

8.6 Timetable/Schedule

Provide a schedule for completing the project, each of the Phases, and specific activities as described in the Scope of Work of this RFP. This should be provided in graphic/chart format, to show: a) all tasks associated with the project effort, and b) the start and end dates of each task with total duration.

8.7 The Organization's Involvement

Describe how and where The Organization and key stakeholders will participate in this process and be engaged in critical decisions before moving from one phase to another.

Define what quality control process the bidder uses to determine that all deliverables meet the requirements for that phase and are consistent with the overall scope and requirements of the project.

8.8 Bidder Requirements

Bidders should identify and describe any information or other requirements they have of The Organization in order for them to successfully complete the Scope of Work as described. If there are any key documents or details that they feel are critical for preparation of their proposal and/or executing the Scope of Work, please identify them as part of the questions/clarification process for the RFP preparation (by 4:00 p.m., Thursday, July 9, 2026). The Organization will make every effort to provide the information as part of the bidding and proposal process or inform all bidders of their plans for providing that information.

9. Commercial Proposal: (Include all Cost Data in the Commercial Proposal Only)

9.1 Alternatives:

If the bidder has any ideas for improving the functionality, reducing costs, or other alternatives for achieving the objectives of the Scope of Work and this RFP, they are encouraged to prepare a separate alternative to their base proposal and submit it with their base proposal. A similar format shall be used for submitting bidder's proposed alternatives as used for the RFP technical and commercial proposal. Bidders shall clearly identify how their Base Proposal will be impacted technically and commercially (i.e. tell us what you're removing and how it will not negatively impact the study).

9.2 Hourly Rates:

Bidder shall provide a table of their all-in hourly rates for all their employees and positions that may be used on the project and that were included in the bidder's cost estimate for the base case proposal.

This table will be used during the execution of the work for calculating any changes or additional work that may be requested by The Organization.

9.3 Cost Estimate:

Bidder shall use the All-In Hourly Rates and estimate of man-hours from the Technical Proposal to provide a cost estimate for the full Scope of Work and activities objectives and deliverable specified.

Maximum Budget Available Under the Grant (with matching funds): $70,000

10. Proposal Narrative:

The Proposal Narrative shall provide a clear and comprehensive description of the proposer's qualifications, understanding of the project, and approach to completing the scope of work. The narrative should include the firm's relevant experience, proposed methodology, project team, work plan, timeline, and any other information demonstrating the proposer's ability to successfully perform the services requested. The Proposal Narrative should address all requirements outlined in this RFP and be organized in a manner that facilitates evaluation.

11. Proposal Forms:

The Organization has provided several forms for the bidder to use to organize their submittal. Below is a list of the forms that have been provided:

1. Addendum A - Scope of Work
2. Addendum B - Evaluation Criteria

End of Request for Proposal

Addendums on Following Pages

Addendum A
Scope of Work

Addendum B
Evaluation Criteria

The undersigned authorized officer of the bidding firm represents that the bidder has carefully examined the Request for Proposal, Scope of Work, and Scoring Criteria as provided. The bidder fully understands the type and quality of the deliverable(s) and/or service(s) sought by the The Organization and the ORE Grant working group, and hereby proposes to supply such at the price stated in their Commercial Proposals and in accordance with their Technical Proposal accompanying this cover sheet.

Bidder's proposal is in full compliance with RFP documents and provisions as provided. Any exceptions to the documents and any bidder's alternatives to the RFP documents or provisions have been clearly identified as an alternative to their proposal and bidder proposed exceptions or alternative(s) show any impact on cost, schedule, or functionality to the proposal. It is understood that The Organization is not obligated to accept any of bidder's exceptions or alternatives.

Submission Authorization

Except where a written signature is required, please type or clearly print the following:

Bidder Firm:_____

By: _____ Date:_____
Authorized Signature

Signing Officer's Name and Title:_____

Correspondence to the bidder with respect to this RFP may be directed to:

Name: _____ Phone #:_____

Title: _____ Email:_____

Address: _____

SCOPE OF WORK - Addendum A

Purpose
Conduct a feasibility study evaluating whether a technology-focused business incubator/accelerator should be established in Butte, in partnership with Headwaters RC&D/Butte Local Development; Headwaters Tech Hub; Montana Tech; and Butte-Silver Bow Community Development.

Tasks
• Existing Conditions — Review current economic development, workforce, and innovation assets; inventory existing incubator/maker-space programs; assess Montana Tech's research and commercialization activity.
• Stakeholder Engagement — Interview/survey key groups (university,entrepreneurs, Tech Hub leads, investors, government, economic development orgs) to identify needs, gaps, and partnership opportunities.
• Market and Feasibility Analysis — Assess demand and startup pipeline, benchmark comparable incubator models, and determine whether a sustainable operation is viable.
• Facility and Site Analysis — Identify space/facility needs and evaluate candidate sites (university, public, private).
• Governance Structure — Recommend ownership/operating model and define partner roles.
• Financial Analysis — Estimate capital and operating costs, identify funding sources, and project financial sustainability.
• Program Model — Recommend services (mentoring, technical assistance, commercialization support, training, etc.) aligned to community/university strengths.
• Implementation Plan (if feasible) — Phased plan covering location, governance, funding, staffing, partnerships, and timeline with performance metrics.

Deliverables
• Stakeholder engagement summary
• Market and existing conditions report
• Facility and site evaluation
• Governance and funding recommendations
• Final feasibility report with executive summary
• Findings presentation to stakeholders

Core Questions to Answer
• Is a technology incubator/accelerator feasible?
• What market demand exists?
• Where should it be located?
• Who should govern and operate it?
• How should it be funded and sustained?
• What services and partnerships are needed?
• What are the implementation steps?

EVALUATION CRITERIA - Addendum B

Proposals will be reviewed by a committee using the criteria and point values below. The maximum score is 100 points.

Related Experience on Similar Projects (25 Points)
Reviewers will look for recent, relevant project experience. Specifically, prior feasibility studies for incubators, accelerators, innovation hubs, or similar facilities; experience managing projects with multiple partners; examples of the proposed team working together on completed projects of comparable scope, with references.

Personnel Qualifications (20 Points)
Individual credentials and experience in relevant work: market and economic analysis, financial feasibility, facility/site assessment, governance recommendations and program development, and capacity of the lead firm and any subconsultants to staff this project adequately.

Local Knowledge and Stakeholder Engagement Approach (20 Points)
Prior work in Butte, southwest Montana, or comparable rural Montana communities, or a clear plan to build that understanding quickly, and a concrete engagement plan covering all key stakeholder groups: Headwaters RC&D/Butte Local Development; Montana Tech; Headwaters Tech Hub; Butte-Silver Bow Community Development; existing and prospective entrepreneurs; investors; and regional economic development organizations.

Research Approach (15 Points)
How will you: assess market demand and startup pipeline potential; benchmark comparable incubator and accelerator models, including rural, university-affiliated, and regional hub programs; evaluate financial feasibility and long-term sustainability, including capital costs, operating projections, and funding source identification; and assess facility and site options.

Schedule, Resources, and Project Management (10 Points)
Reviewers will assess whether the team has the capacity and plan to deliver on time and on budget:

- A clear project schedule with sequenced tasks, milestones, and deliverable dates.
- Named personnel committed to the project, with realistic time allocations.
- A straightforward approach to communication and coordination with the Project Team.

Ability to Meet the Organization's Budget (10 Points)
Proposals must include a detailed cost breakdown. A reminder that the Maximum Budget Available Under the Grant (with matching funds) is $70,000.